

The bill clerk read the nomination of Zachary N. Somers, of the District of Columbia, to be a Judge of the United States Court of Federal Claims for a term of fifteen years.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

(The remarks of Mr. GRASSLEY pertaining to the introduction of S. 5045 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. GRASSLEY. I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. YOUNG). Without objection, it is so ordered.

CHINA

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, I have to tell you, when I am back home, I am struck by one of the things I am hearing in Tennessee, and it is this odd mix of optimism and also of concern.

And Tennesseans are very concerned that we are not going to pass another round of COVID relief in time to help save their businesses and in time to help people who lost their job through no fault of their own. And, on the other hand, they are excited about the fact that we finally have vaccines that are going through the process, that are getting to communities, and there are vaccinations taking place. And I have thought, you know, this is really an interesting mix of emotions, especially with Christmas right around the corner.

And Sunday, after I had visited with some folks, I thought, you know, this, I think, is where people are going to be for a while. Some are very optimistic. Some are incredibly worried. But there is one thing that is a constant—and I have really watched this grow over the last several months. It is the confusion and the anger that is directed at the Chinese Communist Party. And, quite frankly, this is something that I fully believe has reached a boiling point with Tennesseans and with the American public.

Tennesseans were familiar with the tense relationship between China and the United States well before they found themselves in the middle of this pandemic. Here is a good example. At this point, most everyone is familiar with China's notorious disregard for intellectual property rights, but when I first started working on this issue in the House with songwriters back in Tennessee—and it was in the early 2000s—we felt like we were fighting that battle all alone. We had to fight with Chinese officials and eventually were able to establish some initial royalty rates payable to U.S. copyright owners whose sound recordings are broadcast in China. That was a solid win, but the fact that we had to fight

so hard for something so simple really was frustrating, and people in Tennessee have not forgotten that frustration.

Before this year, they were painfully familiar with the Chinese Government's abysmal human rights record. That initial footage of massive protests in Hong Kong had resurrected memories of Tiananmen Square and reminded everyone that the Chinese Government still uses political violence, speech suppression, and torture to silence dissent.

The people I talked to had read about diplomatic tensions and trade deals, and they could sense that in spite of all those optimistic perspectives on the nightly news, our biggest rival in Asia had become our adversary.

So they weren't at all shocked when news reports started rolling in that the Chinese Communist Party officials in Hebei Province and Beijing had done nothing—not one thing—to stop the spread of the novel coronavirus.

Since then, Tennesseans and, indeed, most Americans have received a valuable education, courtesy of Xi Jinping and the Chinese Communist Party. We learned that the Chinese Government's failure to sound the alarm wasn't an anomaly. It was intentional. Neither was there strong-arming of the World Health Organization or the incarceration and torture of doctors and journalists who defied gag orders to blast out warnings to anyone who would listen. They tried to tell us this was reaching a pandemic, and they were punished.

And as they look around at the economic ruin in their communities, as small businesses are shuttered and independent music venues are boarded up for the long haul, all those puzzle pieces are falling into place, and, quite frankly, they are justifiably upset. I would venture to say many of them are absolutely furious with what the Chinese Government has done.

By now, we understand this is what the Chinese Communist Party does as a government, as an all-powerful political organization, and as a group of rabid ideologues from whom acts of genocide flow as easily as the propaganda posted to their many official Twitter accounts. This is all a part of their quest for global dominance, and their success depends on gaining complete control over speech, thought, resources, and their relationships with other nations.

This is the Chinese Communist Party's master plan.

When Xi Jinping took power in 2012, there were a lot of optimistic pundits out there who thought that he would embrace transparency and liberal economic policies, but oh my goodness, have they ever been wrong. In fact, he styled himself in the image of Mao, creating a personality cult that equates attacks on Xi with challenges to the legitimacy of party rule. It is all about him.

Anyone who has opened a history book knows this doesn't bode well for

diplomatic efforts to rebalance power. This isn't my political opinion; this is the reality that diplomats, members of the defense community, and policy experts accept as a matter of fact. The Senate Armed Services Committee accepted this reality when we drafted the bipartisan 2021 NDAA. This year's bill contains the most substantial action we have ever taken to counter Chinese aggression and great power competition. It establishes the Pacific Deterrence Initiative, which will help the military enhance defense capabilities in the region and reaffirms our commitments to Taiwan, India, Vietnam, Japan, and other allies and partners geographically near China.

We drafted numerous provisions to keep U.S. intellectual property, technology, and data out of Beijing's grasp by limiting funding for universities that host Confucius Institutes and restricting defense industrial base employees from working for Chinese-owned companies. Why did we do this? Because we have learned that not only is this part of China's propaganda, this is where they are embedding their spies.

In 2021, we will take major steps to secure our supply chain and invest in American innovation to maintain our technological advantage. We paid particular attention to accelerating the development of 5G networks that are needed by our troops in the field and, to complement that expansion, enhancing our Nation's cyber security strategy.

The Chinese Communist Party isn't just playing politics on Twitter; their tactics pose a very real threat to our Nation's security and that of our allies and our partners.

I have spoken at length about how badly we need to unravel our relationship with China. I have examined problems related to our medical supply chains, security issues in the building blocks of popular technology, and sourcing for rare earth elements. Reclaiming these critical resources will take time and investment, but it can be done, and I will continue to fight for this as we move into the next Congress. But I want to consider just for a moment a few examples of this entanglement that hit particularly close to home and really give a sense of how much private companies and organizations compromise just to maintain access to the Chinese marketplace.

Earlier this year, the PR professionals at the NBA worked some serious overtime after an investigative report published by ESPN showed that the Chinese Communist Party-affiliated coaches at the league's training facilities in Xinjiang were abusing players. That is correct—abusing players. Initial reports of this abuse were ignored by NBA officials.

Keep in mind that these training facilities existed in the same region as those concentration camps used to imprison the Uighur Muslims and others guilty of thought crimes against the

Chinese Communist Party. So what was the NBA doing there in the first place? How could something like this actually happen? Here is the reason: Communist China plays host to an estimated \$4 billion NBA market. They say that China is “basketball obsessed,” and NBA execs have used every avenue they can to take advantage of that \$4 billion market. They jealously protect those relationships even if it means using skyrocketing sales numbers to explain away the blind eye they have turned to the CCP’s crimes against humanity.

They are not alone. This fall, Walt Disney released their live-action version of “Mulan” and caught some well-deserved hell after sharp-eyed rights activists combed through the credits and discovered that filmmakers chose to shoot scenes for the movie—where? Xinjiang, knowing that they would have to cooperate—with whom? The Chinese Communist Party’s propaganda flacks to get the kind of footage they wanted to play to their desired Chinese audience.

Netflix also ran afoul of human rights activists when they inked an adaptation deal with an author who parrots Chinese Communist Party propaganda and made racist comments about the persecuted Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang.

None—none of these scenarios involved high-stakes diplomatic negotiations. No one involved was on a mission to balance the geopolitical scales at all cost. They did, however, stand to net a tidy profit by maintaining friendly relations with the Chinese Communist Party. But did they ever stand up and defend the Uighur Muslim minority? No, they did not.

When faced with such manipulation on a global scale, Tennesseans expect accountability. They want news reports and hearings and absolute condemnation. But that is not what they get. Instead, they get regurgitated propaganda transmitted directly from the CCP, peppered with media buzz words and distilled into sound bites.

Our attempts to hold the Chinese Communist Party accountable for covering up the origins of the pandemic were met with baseless accusations of xenophobia and of racism. I have met similar resistance when speaking truth to power about the CCP’s aggression in Tibet, Mongolia, the concentration camps in Xinjiang, and the arbitrary detention of the Hong Kong freedom fighters. Prominent members of the press, pundits, and even Members of Congress who have access to more than enough information to know better—all provide cover for the Chinese Communist Party at the expense of American lives and livelihoods. It is all there in black and white. They are failing an open-book test because they are refusing—refusing to admit that their coziness with China does not serve the American people or our allies well.

This situation will not evaporate with the start of the new Congress.

Vaccines and defense funding and new technology will solve some immediate problems, but they are not a strategy. Those are action items.

We must all commit right now to an aggressive strategy that leads a whole-of-government approach to protecting American intellectual property, securing our critical supply chains, and bringing our manufacturing back home.

We must assert our role as a leader on the global stage and stand between the Chinese Government and leadership roles in international organizations. How is it that China could have a seat on the Human Rights Council of the United Nations? Look at what they are doing to the Tibetans, to the Taiwanese, to the Hong Kong freedom fighters, and to the Uighur Muslims.

We should continue to provide support for Hong Kong and for Taiwan, build a strong network of allies and partners across the Indo-Pacific, and we should increase our defense investment in the Indo-Pacific Command.

I laid out more items in a white paper I released earlier this year. It is online at [Blackburn.Senate.gov](https://www.blackburn.senate.gov). It is time to pay attention to everything the CCP is doing.

In today’s New York Post, I have an op-ed that lays out how they are using Twitter to troll and intimidate the rest of the world into staying silent. Do you know what? They are, unfortunately, having some success with that. World leaders, powerful corporations, and celebrities are all scared into silence by online propaganda campaigns.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that a copy of my op-ed be printed in the RECORD with these remarks.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the New York Post, Dec. 16, 2020]

HOW CHINA USES INTERNET TROLLS TO HELP COVER UP ITS ATROCITIES

(By Marsha Blackburn)

The greatest benefit to Big Tech’s otherwise dubious influence over our lives is that it’s impossible for the world’s human-rights violators to hide their crimes. Information that years ago would have been filtered by official, sanitized sources now flows from anyone with the guts to tweet about it.

But social media’s power to disseminate ideas means the tyrants themselves are better equipped than ever to obfuscate, lie and troll their way out of crises—capitalizing on the moral confusion and greed of the modern West.

Last December, freedom fighters a world away were busy tweeting about the Chinese Communist Party’s aggression in Hong Kong. Much to the chagrin of party bosses in Beijing, guerrilla coverage of mass protests spread rapidly, prompting digital activists worldwide to condemn the CCP’s latest horror show.

Civil-society groups seized the moment to spotlight the CCP’s colonialism in Tibet and Inner Mongolia, the regime’s cruelty—toward Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang and the horrifying plight of Falun Gong practitioners. Shock turned into revulsion that manifested in demands for change. It was a shining moment of international unity that vowed an end to totalitarianism in Asia.

Today, hundreds of dissenters, including Hong Kong activists Joshua Wong and Jimmy Lai, sit in jail for the sin of criticizing their government. Tibetan language, culture and religion are so repressed that more than 150 Tibetans have self-immolated since 2009. Communist officials terrorize Uighurs under the guise of cultural re-education, locking dissenters in concentration camps and perpetrating mass violence on a scale that has prompted many lawmakers like me to support legislation labeling the violence in Xinjiang a genocide.

Yet fashionable concern soon gave way to a parade of appalling statements from world leaders, multinational corporations and celebrities desperate to preserve their interests in China’s economy. Beijing breathed a sigh of relief and ramped up its own disinformation campaign—about the origins of COVID-19 and the Hong Kong crisis—by taking a page from the freedom fighters’ playbook.

Between March and September, the CCP violated its own ban against Twitter and amassed nearly 1.5 million followers stretched across dozens of official accounts. Using a mix of typical viral content, weird propaganda and COVID-19 misinformation to attract attention, diplomats and other political leaders used their mainstream clout to lob insults at Western leaders and dismiss the global outcry over Beijing’s atrocities as the product of “racism.”

Beijing’s propaganda doesn’t generally pass even a minimal smell test, of course. Its play at “wolf-warrior diplomacy,” named after a patriotic film franchise, is a trollish p.r. campaign that relies on sheer numbers and whataboutism to intimidate critics.

The Chinese diplomats have even learned to tap into the rhetoric of weakness. And sadly, it’s working. China’s “wolf warriors” can sink their teeth into the impressionable, the contrarian and, terrifyingly, the complicit among Western influencers and audiences.

The CCP is counting on our fear of retaliation, not to mention the undying tendency of our own elites to first blame America and the West, to mislead us.

We have no excuse for ignoring reality, however. If you need proof, it’s sitting in your hand. Google phrases like “Uighur forced sterilization” and “Mongol ethnic assimilation,” then brace yourself.

Millions of victims of Xi Jinping’s “China Dream”—a nightmarish blend of ideological conformity and behavior controls—regularly risk their lives speaking truth to power. Meanwhile, in the safe confines of the West, powerhouse personalities and companies agonize over the financial risks of criticizing Beijing.

In 50 or 100 years, when historians ask how such things could have happened, I hope someone invokes the cowardice inherent in that cost-benefit analysis as the answer to their question.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. If they can do that with a hashtag—all of that suppression, all of that intimidation—then think about what they will do in the real world.

If we stand down, the Chinese Government is going to keep pushing to stand up. They will fill a power vacuum because their determination is to be the leader, the global dominator. They want the 21st century to be the China century. It is their strategy. It is what they do. So now is the time to act. I would encourage my colleagues to remember this as we begin a new Congress.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

AMERICAN WORKERS

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, this spring, I was talking with a grocery store worker in Ohio, who told me: "They call me essential, but I feel expendable." That grocery store worker and thousands of others who are on the frontlines of this pandemic risk their lives so that Americans can keep food on their tables and get their packages delivered. They change linen in hospitals. They drive city buses or rural buses. They stock shelves in supermarkets.

When these workers go home at night, having been exposed to the public pretty much their whole workday, they worry they are going to bring the virus home and infect their families.

It is essential workers keeping our society going. A number of American corporations claim to recognize this. They have run feel-good ads—at least they did early in the pandemic—saying "thank you" to essential workers, claiming these workers are the heart of their companies.

But saying "thank you" is not nearly enough. Workers don't need a PR campaign. They need fair pay and protections on the job. These corporations get positive press off their workers while too often paying them poverty wages and, in too many cases, failing to protect their safety in the workplace.

I wrote an open letter this summer to corporate executives, published in their paper of record, the Wall Street Journal. I said to these corporations: You say your workers are essential. Then treat them that way. Our economy is supposed to reward people whose talents are in high demand. That is what we are all taught. That is what you always tell us; right? These workers' skills keep our economy going. Their paychecks should reflect that.

It has been 6 months since that letter was published. It may surprise no one to learn that my phone has not been ringing off the hook with calls from CEOs who want to discuss renewed efforts to invest in their workers.

All that has changed is that corporate profits have gone up, hazard pay has disappeared, and more workers have died. Profits are up at most of the biggest companies, especially the large retail companies.

The Brookings Institution studied the 13 biggest retailers in this country and found that their earnings have shot up 39 percent compared with last year, and stock prices are up 33 percent. Guess how much wages have gone up. One dollar an hour.

The Washington Post looked at the 50 biggest corporations. Between April and September, these companies handed out more than \$240 billion—240,000 million, \$240 billion—to their stockholders through stock buybacks and dividends.

It is workers making these companies successful. It is workers risking their lives on the job, but shareholders got nearly 8 percent of the profits workers created.

Look at Amazon. The company's quarterly profits increased by a staggering 200 percent. But that same Amazon rolled back its tiny \$2-an-hour raise in June and announced a bonus of just \$300 per worker. You heard that correctly—not \$3,000 but \$300, from a company that brought in \$280 billion in revenue last year.

If even a global pandemic, where American workers have been on the frontlines—if even that—will not get corporations to rethink their business model that treats workers as expendable, then, frankly, it is time—and my colleagues should hear this—to stop letting them run this economy.

They had their chance. They failed. Just look around us. If corporate America won't deliver for its workers, it is time we step in and create a better system, centered on the dignity of work.

The American people have made it clear that they want a government that is on the side of workers. Eighty-one million voters gave Joe Biden a decisive victory of more than 7 million votes. That is a mandate for change.

In June, I laid out actions that corporations could take on their own, like raising base pay to \$15 an hour. Since they mostly refused, we should raise the Federal minimum wage to \$15 an hour.

Workers are still not safe on the job. So President Biden can immediately issue an OSHA, or Occupational Safety and Health Administration, emergency temporary standard forcing corporations to protect their workers.

Many companies still deny their employees paid sick leave, even during a pandemic. So we have to pass a national paid family leave plan.

Corporations are expanding rather than ending their exploitive "independent contractor" business model. So we are going to have to use the law to make them treat their workers as true employees. You know how they do it: Particularly large corporations will contract out custodial work, security work, and food service work in their company cafeteria, for instance. They contract it out to a private company that pays much less than the corporation pays, often wages barely above the minimum wage. Those workers should have to be treated like workers living under American labor law.

Corporations continue to coerce workers out of forming unions. So we need to pass the PRO Act—Protecting Our Right to Organize Act—to empower workers with a voice in their workplace.

The economy isn't physics. It is not governed by a scientific law outside our control. It is made up of people making choices about our values and in what kind of society we want to live.

That is the reason we have an Occupational Safety and Health Administration. It is why we have these agencies: to make sure that workers are treated fairly to begin with.

We have the power to change how the economy works so that it rewards work instead of greed. We can create more jobs at middle-class wages. We can give people power over their lives and schedules. We can expand economic security and opportunity for everyone.

Americans voted for this change. Americans aren't going to wait for corporations to reform themselves on their own. That is for sure. They never have. They never will. It is up to the rest of us to deliver for the people whom we serve and create a country where all work has dignity.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

TRIBUTE TO CORY GARDNER

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. President, it is my pleasure to honor my good friend and my colleague Senator CORY GARDNER. CORY and I were friends in the House of Representatives. Our friendship deepened in the Senate, especially after he took the reins as chair and I as the ranking member of the Subcommittee on East Asia of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in the 115th Congress.

We were unlikely partners in a lot of ways. He is a conservative Republican and I am a liberal Democrat. I know that Tom Brady is the best quarterback ever. He just might say that it is John Elway.

But like me, CORY is a pragmatist, and we did find common ground. In fact, we were a two-man legislative wrecking crew, with several credits to our names.

GARDNER-MARKEY collaborated on such hits as the Asia Reassurance Initiative Act, ARIA, sweeping Asia-focused legislation to reorient our Indo-Pacific strategy around alliances, common values, and mutual security; the Cambodia Democracy Act, to stand up for civil society the rights of a political opposition; the Taiwan International Participation Act of 2018, to signal both our commitment to the island nation and our displeasure with China's efforts to shut it out of international organizations; and the Leverage to Enhance Effective Diplomacy Act, to build the conditions for a future North Korea that no longer threatens its neighbors and the world with nuclear weapons.

With CORY as chair and myself as ranking member, we convened hearings, drafted broad legislation, hosted